Church Governance

Defines how our church is organized, makes decisions, and ensures accountability through leadership roles, policies, and biblical principles.

Church Board Member Nomination and Approval Process □□□□□□□

Church Board Member Nomination and Approval Process

Church board member nomination and approval process a multi-step process requires minimum 6 weeks.

1. Nomination Committee Election (Week 1)
2. Church Board Memeber Nominations & Feedback (Week 2-5)
3. Church Board Member Nomination Approval Voting - Membership Meeting (Week 6)

Phase	Week	Activity	Description
Nomination Committee Election	Week 1 (Day 1 - Sunday)	Nomination Committee Election - Membership Meeting	Electing two active member to join two existing board members to form nomination committee led by the Chair.
Announcement & Nomination Period	Week 2 (Day 1 - Sunday)	Nomination announcement (Sunday Service)	Announce the opening of board nominations and provide congregation with nomination instruction. Include eligibility criteria and submission deadline.
	Week 2	Nomination Committee Meeting #1	Review board member nomination criteria.
	Week 2	Nomination submission period (5-6 days)	• Members submit nominations to nomintation comittee members. Include a specific cutoff date and time (e.g., Saturday, 5 p.m.). • Submission deadline should be set roughly 5-6 days after the annoucement.
Committee Screening and Finalize Nominees List	Early Week 3	Committee Meeting #2 - Candidate Screening	• Review all submitted nominations. Select shortlist of candidates to contact for willingness and prayerful consideration. • Committee members contact potential nominees for acceptance or decline. Ensure confidential handling until confirmation. • Reserving minimum 4-5 days so potential nominees have enough time to make decision and as well as giving the committee time to reach out to other potential nominees in case of decline.

	Late Week 3	Committee Meeting #3 - Finalize Nominees List	Committee confirms accepted nominees. Verify readiness and ministry standing. Finalize nominees for Sunday announcement.
Announcement & Congregational Feedback	Week 4 (Day 1 - Sunday)	Publish Nominee Names	Announce the confirmed candidate list to the congregation during Sunday service). Provide at least three weeks' notice before voting.
Church Board Member Nomination Approval Voting Meeting	Week 6	Membership meeting voting to approve moninees serving as new board members for the upcoming year.	Conduct voting during the membership meeting. Include proxy forms if applicable. Provide clear voting instructions and quorum count process.

2025 Example Timeline

- Sunday, October 26 - Announce to congregation to submit nominations by November 1st, 5 p.m.
- Monday, October 27, 8:00-8:30 p.m. - Meeting: Review criteria
- Tuesday, November 4, 8:00-8:30 p.m. - Meeting: Screen nominees to be contacted
- Saturday, November 8, 8:30-9:00 a.m. - Meeting: Final review before Sunday announcement
- Sunday, November 9, 2025 - Publish nominee names
- Sunday, November 30, 2025 - Election during membership meeting

References

- 2025 Nomination Committee Election Meeting PPT
- Formation of the Nomination Committee - Video

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Bylaws of Saskatoon Chinese Alliance Church of The Alliance Canada

Bylaws for Saskatoon Chinese Alliance Church of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada

PREAMBLE

These Bylaws, the Local Church Constitution and the Manual of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada constitute the governing documents of the Church.

DEFINITIONS

In these Bylaws, unless the context otherwise requires:

“Board” means Governing Board of the Church under Article III; “Bylaws” means the Bylaws of the Church; “Constitution” means the Local Church Constitution contained in the Manual of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada; “Church” means Saskatoon Chinese Alliance Church of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada.

ARTICLE I - MEMBERSHIP

The Board shall be responsible for all matters related to membership. There shall be three categories of membership: Active Member – An Active Member is a member in good standing who has been officially confirmed as having met the qualifications for membership outlined in the Constitution and these Bylaws, and who regularly attends and actively supports the church in ways outlined in the membership covenant. Active Members shall be eligible (i) to vote, (ii) to give primary leadership to Church ministries, and (iii) unless otherwise restricted in these Bylaws, to hold office.

Associate Member – An Associate Member is a former Active Member who is non-resident, or has two (2) consecutive absences from the Meetings of the Membership without providing written notices to the Board, and for reasons acceptable to the Board, desires to retain membership in the Church. Associate Members may not vote at meetings of members, nor hold office in the Church. An Associate Member may be returned to Active Member status at the discretion of the Board.

Member Not in Good Standing – A Member Not in Good Standing is one who (i) has not continued to meet the obligations of membership outlined in the membership covenant to remain a member of good standing even after reasonable attempts to rectify it, or (ii) has been placed under discipline within the procedures identified in the membership covenant. This status is maintained until Active Member status is restored by action of the Board. A Member in this category may not retain, nor be elected or appointed to positions of leadership or ministry in the church and may not vote in meetings of members.

To become an Active Member of the Church, an individual will need to participate in the application and orientation process approved by the Board.

Applicants for membership will be required to sign a membership covenant that will identify the commitments being made. An applicant for membership becomes a Member when officially confirmed by the Board. Applicants for membership transferring from another church will be required to meet the qualifications for becoming an Active Member in the Constitution and Bylaws. A person may be removed from membership by a majority vote of the Board for anyone of the following reasons: the written request for withdrawal from membership by the member; the death of the member; the unwillingness of a member to address a breach of a commitment in the membership covenant to the satisfaction of the Board; absence from regular services of the Church for at least six months, without sufficient reason, may result in either removal from membership or in a change to Associate Member status, after a reasonable attempt to contact them has been made by a Board-designated person; failure to confirm membership commitments in periodic reviews of the membership list conducted by the Board.

ARTICLE II - GOVERNMENT

Two Meetings of the Membership shall be held each year.

The First Meeting of the Membership shall be held within the first three (3) months of the calendar year on a date set by the Board. At this meeting, the financial reports for the preceding fiscal year shall be presented, and reports from the Senior Pastor and Board shall be received. Other business may also be conducted as identified in the proposed agenda.

The Second Meeting of the Membership shall be held within the last three (3) months of the calendar year on a date set by the Board. At this meeting, the Board members shall be elected. Other business may also be conducted as identified in the proposed agenda.

The proposed agendas and written reports for both Meetings of Membership shall be available on or before the Sunday prior to the respective meetings.

A Special Business Meeting may be called by the Board.

Notice shall be given by oral and/or bulletin announcement at least two (2) consecutive Sundays prior to any Meetings of the Membership. Such notice shall indicate the purpose of the meeting.

The quorum for a duly-called meeting of members shall be no less than one-third (1/3) of the Active Members. If a meeting is adjourned for lack of a quorum, the Active Members present at the next duly called meeting shall constitute a quorum.

Each member is entitled to one vote and voting by proxy is not allowed.

Robert’s Rules of Order will be the definitive resource on procedures at meetings of the members.

ARTICLE III - GOVERNING BOARD

The Board shall annually inform the Nominating Committee (described under Article VI) of the number of Board members desired for the next term.

The length of term shall be two (2) years with a maximum of two (2) consecutive terms (4 consecutive years) and shall be eligible for re-election after a break of one (1) year.

The term of office will begin from January 1st, immediately following the election, and conclude December 31st at the end of the term.

The quorum for meetings of the Board shall be a simple majority.

The Board shall elect its Vice-Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer from among its membership. The positions of Secretary and Treasurer may be held by one person, in which case the position will be identified as Secretary/Treasurer.

The Board shall set, and be the final interpreter of, Church policies.

The Board shall regularly review the Senior Pastor’s ministry, and as part of the annual budget process, review staff salaries and benefits.

If a Board member is absent for three (3) consecutive meetings without sufficient reason, the remaining members may declare the position vacant and fill it in accordance with the Constitution.

Persons who are not Board members may be present at a Board meeting or portion thereof only at the invitation of the Board.

ARTICLE IV - FINANCES

The Treasurer and those appointed by the Board shall be the signing officers for the Church bank accounts. The Treasurer shall be one of the signing officers of all Church-related accounts.

The fiscal year of the Church shall be from January 1st to December 31st .

ARTICLE V - CHURCH MINISTRIES

The Board shall ensure that there is an effective organizational structure for the church and its ministries.

The Board shall approve all ministries and primary ministry leaders to fulfill the mission and ministry vision of the Church. The Board shall ensure that policies and procedures are established for the affirmation, appointment and possible removal of leaders in all church ministries.

Each ministry leader or committee shall function with a ministry description that describes both responsibilities and accountability. The group or individual that appoints the person or committee shall be responsible to ensure the ministry description is in place.

ARTICLE VI - ELECTIONS

A Nominating Committee shall consist of the Senior Pastor, two (2) members appointed by the Board and two (2) members elected by the Active Members at a duly called meeting.

The Nominating Committee shall establish its process for considering potential nominees.

Any Active Member in good standing with proven spiritual maturity may be considered for nomination to the Board.

Additional nominations may be made by any two (2) Active Members by following procedure:

Ensuring that a process leading up to the nomination parallels the care used by the Nominating Committee, including an interview to determine that the individual is willing to support the constituted purpose and structure of the Church, willing to support the pastor, and meets other qualifications required of Board members. Such interview will include at least one (1) existing Board member;

Secure the approval of the person whose name will be place in nomination;

Submit the name in writing to the Senior Pastor, as Chair of the Nominating Committee, for posting two (2) weeks prior to the Meeting of the Membership, describing the care taken prior to placing the name in nomination.

If the Nominating Committee wishes to consider one of its members for nomination, that person will withdraw from the Committee while the decision is being made regarding the nomination.

Board members shall be elected by ballots. In order to be elected, a Board member must be confirmed by a minimum of two-thirds (2/3) majority of the votes cast at the Second Meeting of the Membership or a duly called meeting for such purpose.

ARTICLE VII - GENERAL

No offering may be solicited without the approval of the Board.

If a copy of these Bylaws is translated into Chinese, the English version shall be the official set of Bylaws.

ARTICLE VIII - AMENDMENTS

Bylaws may be amended by a minimum two-thirds majority of the Active Members present at a duly called meeting for such purpose.

Bylaw amendments shall be valid only after they have been approved by the District Executive Committee.

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Church Team Roles

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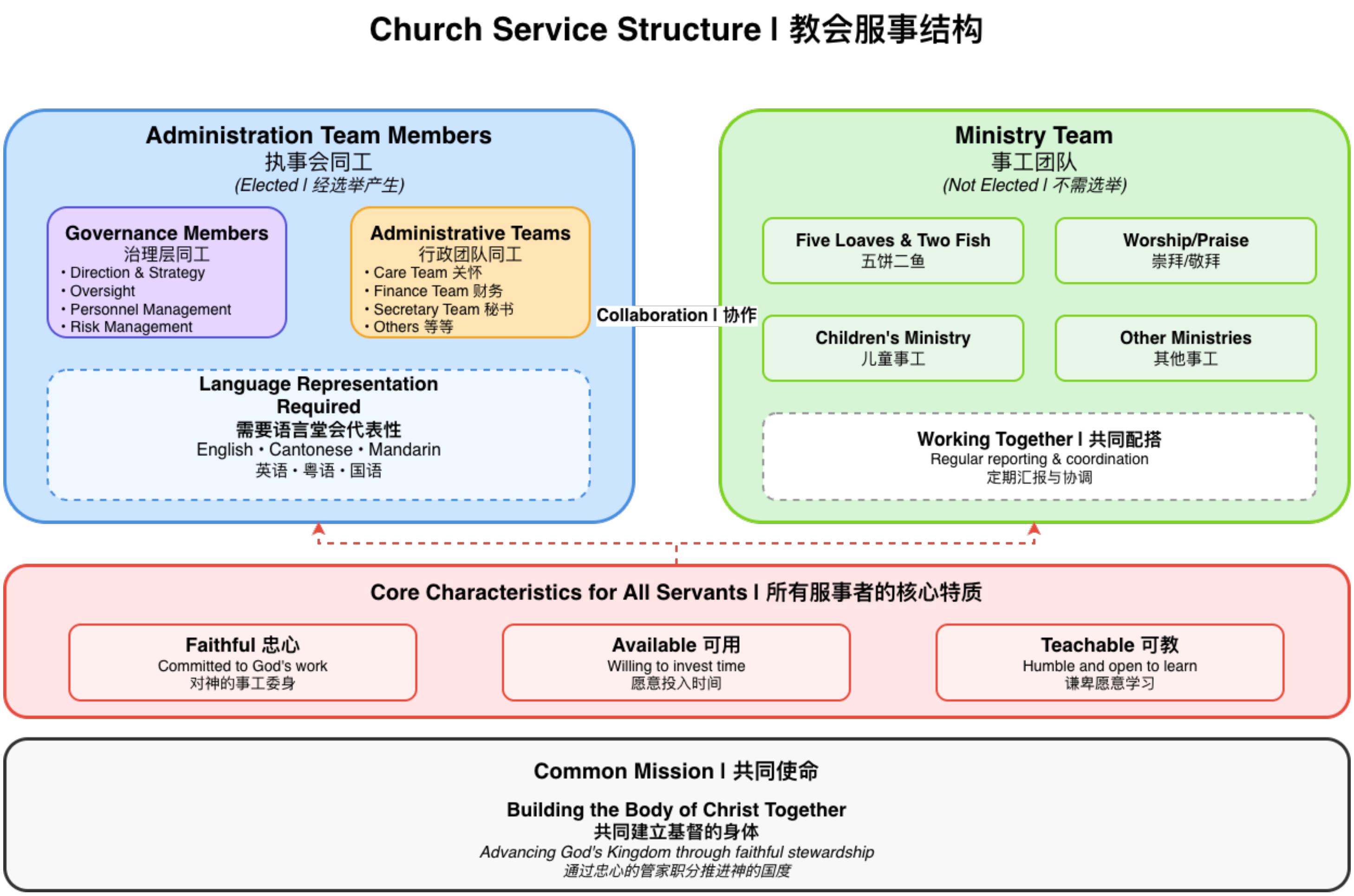

Basic Understanding

Q1: What are the different service roles in our church?

Church service roles fall into two main categories:

1. **Administration Team Members**: Elected members who bear governance and key ministry responsibilities, focusing on administrative support for daily church operations. Administration Team Members include:
   - Governance members (responsible for overall direction, strategy, and oversight)
   - Administrative team members (care, finance, secretary, etc.)
2. **Ministry Team**: Leaders or coordinators in various ministry areas who do not require election. This includes:
   - Five Loaves and Two Fish ministry leaders
   - Worship/praise leaders
   - Children's ministry leaders

- Other ministry area leaders and workers

Q2: What's the difference between Administration Team Members and Ministry Team?

The key differences are:

- **Administration Team Members**: Elected to serve, bearing governance or key administrative responsibilities. They must meet the specific requirements outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9, handle sensitive information, and make significant decisions
- **Ministry Team**: Participate in leading and coordinating specific ministries based on their gifts and calling. No election process required, but equally essential to the church body

Both are vital members of the body of Christ, just with different responsibilities, selection processes, and accountability structures.

Q3: What basic qualities should all servants possess?

Regardless of service role, everyone needs **FAT** characteristics:

- **Faithful**: Faithful to God, faithful to what's entrusted, putting God's work above personal interests
- **Available**: Willing to invest time and energy, able to respond when needed
- **Teachable**: Maintaining a humble learning heart, willing to receive guidance and grow

Additionally:

- **Spiritual character**: Pursuing holiness, living out the image of Christ
- **Team spirit**: Able to work well with other members
- **Confidentiality**: Especially when handling sensitive information (particularly important for Administration Team Members)

Administration Team Members

Q4: What roles are included in Administration Team Members?

Administration Team Members include two categories:

1. **Governance members**: Board members responsible for overall church direction, strategy, and oversight
2. **Administrative team members**: Including care, finance, secretary teams and others, responsible for administrative support of daily church operations

All Administration Team Members require election.

Q5: Why do Administration Team Members need to be elected?

The responsibilities borne by Administration Team Members are critical to church operations. They need to:

- Handle sensitive information (such as finances, member data)
- Make decisions affecting church operations
- Represent the church in executing important functions

- Meet the specific requirements for church leaders outlined in Scripture

Therefore, they need to be elected to ensure the congregation has confidence in their character and capabilities.

Q6: What special considerations are there when electing Administration Team Members?

When electing Administration Team Members, we need to pay special attention to:

- **Language congregation representation**: Ensuring all three language congregations (English, Cantonese, Mandarin) have appropriate representation, so the board can understand and serve the needs of all members
- **FAT characteristics**: Candidates need to demonstrate being Faithful, Available, and Teachable
- **Spiritual qualifications**: Meeting biblical requirements for church leaders
- **Professional capabilities**: Possessing the skills and experience needed for the respective positions

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Administrative Team Members (Care, Finance, Secretary, etc.)

Q7: What are the main goals of the administrative teams?

Administrative teams ensure smooth church operations through providing administrative and organizational support. Each team has a specific mission:

- **Care Team**: Building a caring community where the weary and burdened can find rest
- **Secretary Team**: Ensuring smooth church operations and maintaining accurate records
- **Finance Team**: Acting as stewards of financial resources, maintaining thorough financial records

Q8: What specifically does the Care Team do?

Care Team work includes:

- Regularly reviewing congregation wellbeing and caring for pastoral families' needs
- Arranging visits monthly or as needed
- Coordinating prayer chains to facilitate intercession
- Preparing gifts for special occasions (baptism, Christmas, Mother's Day, etc.)
- Coordinating transportation for those seeking to attend worship
- Coordinating orientation activities for new members and visitors
- Recommending benevolence fund candidates to those in financial need

Q9: What specifically does the Finance Team do?

Finance Team work includes:

- Bookkeeping and maintaining financial records (payroll, income and expenses, bills, receipts, insurance, etc.)
- Counting Sunday offerings weekly and entering them into the computer system
- Producing financial reports (weekly offering statistics, quarterly and annual reports)
- Ensuring financial transparency and accountability

Q10: What specifically does the Secretary Team do?

Secretary Team work includes:

- Maintaining and updating various lists (membership, participants, visitors, baptisms, memorial services, baby dedications, etc.)
- Producing church publications (meeting minutes, bulletins, announcements and program notices, policies and guidelines, congregational newsletters, annual reports, etc.)
- Ensuring information is communicated accurately and timely
- Assisting in compiling and implementing operational policies, documents, and guidelines

Q11: What professional skills do administrative team members need?

Different teams have different requirements:

All administrative members need:

- Good organizational skills with attention to detail
- Effective verbal and written communication abilities
- Ability to work independently and collaborate with team members
- Basic technical skills (word processing, spreadsheets, internet use)
- Commitment to confidentiality

Finance Team additionally needs:

- Accounting and bookkeeping knowledge
- Good analytical abilities
- Understanding of the spiritual aspects of stewardship

Governance Members (Board Members)

Q12: What are the core responsibilities of governance members?

Governance members are responsible for guiding and protecting the ministry, ensuring the church remains faithful to its mission. Their responsibilities are called "fiduciary duties" and include:

1. **Honesty**: Acting in good faith and sharing important information
2. **Loyalty**: Putting ministry interests above personal interests, avoiding conflicts of interest
3. **Care**: Understanding church operations and being prepared for meetings
4. **Diligence**: Actively asking questions and contributing professional knowledge

Q13: What work should governance members focus on?

They should focus on governance, not daily management:

- **Setting direction**: Discussing vision, mission, and strategy
- **Accountability and oversight**: Monitoring work and verifying policy implementation
- **Personnel management**: Participating in the selection, development, and evaluation of church leaders
- **Risk management**: Ensuring finances and assets are properly managed

- **Language congregation balance**: Ensuring the needs of all three congregations (English, Cantonese, Mandarin) are attended to and addressed

Q14: What's special about Christian ministry governance?

Christian ministry governance has unique spiritual dimensions:

- **Steward identity**: Members are stewards of Christ's ministry, not owners or bosses
- **Love and unity**: Members are brothers and sisters in Christ, treating each other with love and respect
- **Common purpose**: Working together to accomplish Christ's mission
- **Healthy debate**: Encouraging honest dialogue, but supporting decisions once made
- **Listening to God**: Determining God's direction through collective discernment

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Ministry Team

Q15: What do Ministry Team leaders do?

Ministry Team leaders bear leadership and coordination responsibilities in their respective ministry areas, including:

- **Five Loaves and Two Fish ministry**: Coordinating food care and practical needs support
- **Worship/praise ministry**: Planning and leading worship, coordinating worship teams
- **Children's ministry**: Planning and executing children's Sunday school and activities

Their work focuses on:

- Planning and executing specific ministry activities
- Recruiting and training ministry volunteers
- Collaborating with Administration Team Members to advance the church's overall mission
- Caring for the spiritual needs of ministry participants

Q16: What qualifications do Ministry Team leaders need?

While not requiring election, Ministry Team leaders should possess **FAT** characteristics:

- **Faithful**: Having a burden for and commitment to the ministry
- **Available**: Willing to invest time and energy
- **Teachable**: Willing to learn and grow

Additionally:

- Possessing relevant gifts and experience
- Able to lead and coordinate teams
- Aligned with the church's overall vision

Q17: How does the Ministry Team collaborate with Administration Team Members?

The relationship works like this:

- **Ministry Team** focuses on planning and executing specific ministries

- **Administration Team Members** provide administrative support, resource allocation, and overall direction
- Ministry Team leaders should report regularly to the board
- Major decisions (such as budgets, policies) require board approval

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Practical Guidance

Q18: How do I simply explain our church's service structure to others?

You can say:

"Our church has two main types of service roles:

Administration Team Members are elected and responsible for church governance and administrative work, including board members and administrative teams (care, finance, secretary, etc.). They ensure smooth church operations and make important decisions. When electing, we pay special attention to representation from all three language congregations (English, Cantonese, Mandarin).

Ministry Team is responsible for planning and executing various ministry areas, such as Five Loaves and Two Fish, worship/praise, children's ministry, etc. They lead specific ministries according to their gifts.

Both work together to advance the church's mission."

Q19: How do I decide which type of service suits me?

Consider these questions:

1. **Do you possess FAT characteristics?** Are you Faithful, Available, and Teachable?
2. **What are your gifts?** Are you skilled in administration, organization, planning, or direct people ministry?
3. **Where is your burden?** Are you interested in governance and administrative management, or do you have a burden for specific ministries (like children, worship)?
4. **What's your time commitment?** Administration Team Members need to attend regular meetings and bear ongoing responsibilities; Ministry Team time may be more flexible
5. **What's your life stage?** Administration Team Members need to meet specific biblical requirements for leaders

If unsure, you can start serving in the Ministry Team and gradually discover your gifts and calling.

Q20: How do I know if I possess FAT characteristics?

You can ask yourself these questions:

Faithful:

- Am I willing to commit long-term to this service?
- Can I put the church's interests above personal convenience?
- Am I reliable and able to complete entrusted tasks?

Available:

- Do I have time to attend meetings and complete work?
- When the church has needs, can I respond?
- Am I willing to adjust personal arrangements to accommodate service?

Teachable:

- Am I willing to receive advice and guidance?
- Can I admit mistakes and learn to improve?
- Do I remain open to new methods and ideas?

If your answers to most of these questions are positive, you have a good foundation for service.

Q21: What if I feel I'm not serving well enough?

Here are some practical steps:

1. **Clarify your specific responsibilities**: Confirm role expectations with team leaders or the board
2. **List priorities**: Don't try to do everything; focus on the most important responsibilities
3. **Seek support**: Learn from experienced workers and request training when necessary
4. **Regular review**: Review quarterly to see what's going well and what needs improvement
5. **Pray and depend on God**: Remember, this is God's work; we're just vessels
6. **Maintain a FAT mindset**: Focus on being Faithful, Available, and Teachable rather than perfect

Most importantly, God doesn't use perfect people but willing hearts.

Q22: How do I encourage brothers and sisters to participate in service?

You can emphasize these points:

1. **FAT is more important than ability**: God values being Faithful, Available, and Teachable more than perfect ability
2. **Everyone has gifts**: God gives each believer different gifts that can be used in service
3. **Start small**: You can help in the Ministry Team first without taking on major responsibilities initially
4. **Team collaboration**: The church is Christ's body, needing each member to function
5. **Growth opportunity**: Through service, you'll experience God's grace and grow spiritually

Q23: Why is language congregation representation important?

Our church has three language congregations (English, Cantonese, Mandarin), each with unique cultural backgrounds and needs. Having representatives from each language congregation on the board:

- Ensures all members' voices are heard
- Helps the board understand the needs of different cultural backgrounds
- Promotes communication and unity among the three congregations
- Makes decisions more comprehensive and better able to serve the entire church community

This isn't division but pursuing unity in diversity, making everyone feel cared for and represented.

Summary

The church's service structure includes:

- **Administration Team Members**: Elected to serve, responsible for church governance and administrative support (board members + administrative teams). Elections consider representation from all three language congregations (English, Cantonese, Mandarin)
- **Ministry Team**: Responsible for planning and executing various ministry areas (Five Loaves and Two Fish, worship/praise, children's ministry, etc.)

Regardless of which type of service, the most important thing is possessing **FAT** characteristics: **Faithful, Available, Teachable**.

Every role is important, and everyone can find a suitable service position. The key isn't position level or ability size, but whether you faithfully use the gifts God has given us to build up the body of Christ together.

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Tithing and Offerings □□□□□

Tithing and Offerings: From Covenantal History to Modern Stewardship

Introduction

In the context of Scripture, theology, church history, and practice, "tithing" and "offerings" constitute the two pillars of Christian financial ethics. This paper discusses tithing and offerings from the perspectives of terminology, Scripture, history, theology, and pastoral practice. The accompanying brief explanations can help brothers and sisters establish a biblically-grounded view of giving.

Definitions of Tithing and Offerings

Tithing

The Old Testament word is ???????? (m?·????r), literally meaning "a tenth." The corresponding New Testament word is ???????, also meaning "a tenth."

From a theological definition, tithing is viewed as a fixed-proportion (10% of income) financial act based on biblical instruction. Its essence lies in acknowledging God's absolute sovereignty over all things and the believer's fundamental duty as an entrusted steward.

Tithing belongs to God because Scripture clearly declares that the earth and everything in it belongs to God (Psalm 24:1), and explicitly states that a tenth of all produce from the land is holy to the LORD (Leviticus 27:30-32; Numbers 18:21-32). This is what people ought to return to God. When believers wholeheartedly offer their tithe, they establish the most basic honesty and obedience before God (Proverbs 3:9-10). Thus, tithing is the baseline responsibility that God's people must fulfill within their covenant relationship.

Its primary function is to support those who serve God in worship, especially the Levites, who in turn were required to give a portion to the priests (Numbers 18:21-26). In certain circumstances, tithes were also used to help the poor in society (Deuteronomy 14:28-29).

Offerings

In contrast, the scope of "offerings" is broader and more flexible. In a broad sense, it refers to any type of gift given to a king or deity as an expression of loyalty, worship, or devotion. Such offerings symbolize the giver's pledge of loyalty to the recipient. Offerings can take the form of sacrifices, tithes, firstfruits, or money.

In the Old Testament, two words commonly express this:

- **???????? (qorban)** — meaning "to bring near"
- **??????? (minchah)** — meaning "gift"

From this definition, offerings include not only tithes but also other voluntary financial gifts given out of gratitude, worship, or for specific needs. Offerings have no fixed proportional limit; their core lies in the believer's inner generosity and response to the Holy Spirit's prompting.

In modern practice, tithing is often compared to the "regular budget" that maintains basic church operations and pastoral support, while offerings more often flow toward missions, benevolence, or special building projects. This distinction lies not only in amounts but also in the level of motivation: **tithing emphasizes obedience and discipline, while offerings emphasize love and spiritual freedom.**

Historical Evolution of Biblical Tradition

Pre-Mosaic Origins

The origins of tithing predate the Mosaic Law. In Genesis 4, Cain and Abel's sacrifices, though not explicitly mentioning proportions, established the principle of offering the "firstfruits" or "best" to God—considered the original prototype of the later tithing system.

Abraham's Tithe

The first explicit tithing record begins with Abraham. After rescuing Lot and achieving victory, he gave a tenth of the spoils to Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of God Most High (Genesis 14:18-20; Hebrews 7:1-2).

This act holds profound theological significance: it occurred approximately six hundred years before the Law was given, proving that tithing originally arose not from external compulsion, but as an internal, spontaneous acknowledgment and gratitude following the experience of God's sovereign deliverance. The author of Hebrews later used this historical event to argue that Melchizedek (and Christ's priesthood) is far superior to the Levitical priesthood, because even Levi's ancestor Abraham paid tithes to him (Hebrews 7:1-10).

Jacob's Vow

Jacob's vow at Bethel is another key pre-Law example. After dreaming of the ladder and receiving God's promise, he pledged:

> "Of all that you give me I will give you a tenth." (Genesis 28:20-22)

Jacob's tithe was more like a personal covenant of gratitude, reflecting a creature's willingness to establish a long-term, systematic material response in the face of God's care.

Institutionalization in the Mosaic Law

When the Israelites received the Mosaic Law in the wilderness, tithing transformed from a spontaneous ancestral tradition into a rigorous socio-political and religious system. Through study of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, it becomes clear that Old Testament law actually prescribed multiple tithing systems, often totaling far more than 10%.

1. Levitical Tithe

Also called the "First Tithe." God commanded that a tenth of Israel's produce go to the Levites, because the Levites had no inheritance in the Promised Land and had to depend on this provision to dedicate themselves to serving in the tabernacle and temple (Leviticus 27:30-32; Numbers 18:21-24; Deuteronomy 18:1-5).

After receiving this, the Levites were required to give a tenth of it as a "heave offering" to the family of the high priest Aaron, called the "tithe of the tithe" (Numbers 18:26-28, 32).

2. Festival Tithe

Also called the "Second Tithe." Deuteronomy required Israelites to set aside another tenth of their remaining produce to bring to the place God chose (later Jerusalem) for festival celebrations, to be enjoyed with family, Levites, and the poor (Deuteronomy 14:22-27). This aimed to strengthen national cohesion and the joy of worship through financial redistribution.

3. Welfare Tithe (Poor Tithe)

Every third year, Israelites were to store their tithe within their own towns, specifically to provide for the Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows in their communities (Deuteronomy 14:28-29, 26:12-13).

The combined implementation of these systems meant that devout Israelites' annual financial giving could reach 20% to 23% of their income, and in certain third-year periods, even higher. This complex system was not only designed to maintain worship activities but also, in an ancient society lacking modern welfare institutions, constructed a primitive social safety net based on religious covenant.

Prophetic Teaching

In the Old Testament, offerings occupied an important place in Israel's religious life as a vital practice of worshiping God and served as a barometer of spiritual health. During the spiritual revivals under King Hezekiah and Nehemiah, people enthusiastically paid their tithes, even causing the temple storerooms to overflow (2 Kings 18:4; Nehemiah 10:37-38). However, during mediocre periods, provisions for the Levites were often withheld, causing temple services to collapse and priests to leave (Nehemiah 13:10-12).

Malachi's Indictment

The prophet Malachi, in the context of Israel's post-exile spiritual apathy, issued a stunning accusation:

> "Not paying tithes is 'robbing God'" (Malachi 3:8-9)

The theological logic here is based on Leviticus's declaration: "A tithe of everything from the land... belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD" (Leviticus 27:30).

Malachi issued a challenging call:

> "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house." (Malachi 3:10)

He then proposed a unique "test" promise: God will surely open the windows of heaven and pour out blessing for those who obey. This promise is not merely about financial blessing, but also refers to God accomplishing what He originally intended in that person's life. Not tithing is a compromise of faith, a lack of trust in God, and this unbelief often extends to other areas of life beyond money (Hebrews 11:6).

Justice and Offerings

However, mere offerings without justice and love for others cannot be pleasing to God. Offerings must be combined with righteous conduct, just living, and care for the vulnerable, otherwise they are merely empty religious expression.

Isaiah clearly pointed out that although the Israelites offered many sacrifices, they neglected justice and good deeds (Isaiah 1:16-17). What God values is not formal sacrifice but sincerity of heart and righteousness in life. Offerings divorced from care for the vulnerable become ineffective religious acts.

The prophet Amos also rebuked the Israelites for outwardly observing festivals and offering sacrifices while lacking justice (Amos 5:21, 24). This again shows that God does not delight in formalized religious behavior, but emphasizes that worship must be accompanied by just living.

The prophets' corrections align perfectly with New Testament teaching.

The New Testament: From External to Internal

In the New Testament, teaching about giving addresses not only legal form but places greater emphasis on inner effectiveness.

Jesus on Tithing

In Scripture, Jesus directly mentioned tithing twice. His attitude demonstrates respect for the current law while severely striking against formalism.

In His rebuke of the Pharisees (Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42), Jesus pointed out that they meticulously tithed even on mint, dill, and cumin, yet neglected the more fundamental matters of the law—"justice, mercy, and faithfulness." Jesus did not tell them to stop tithing but emphasized that these weightier matters are the core. This means that from a New Testament perspective, tithing is not a way to "buy out" one's obligation to God, but a natural extension of godly living.

Additionally, in the parable of the tax collector and the Pharisee, the Pharisee used "I give a tenth of all I get" as capital for self-righteousness, yet was rejected by God (Luke 18:9-12). This theological insight profoundly reveals: **when tithing becomes a legalistic record of merit, it loses its essence as worship.**

The Poor Widow's Offering

What Jesus commended was not the proud tither, but the poor widow who gave her "living"—because her offering embodied complete dependence and sacrifice (Mark 12:41; Luke 21:1-4). We see that Jesus knew everyone's giving behavior, and more importantly, knew the heart of the giver.

Paul's Theology of Giving: Cheerfulness, Proportion, and Sacrificial Spirit

The apostle Paul did not require the Gentile churches he established to practice the "tithe" law. Instead, in 2 Corinthians 8-9, he established an entirely new framework for giving based on "the grace of Christ."

Paul's view of giving contains the following core principles:

1. Cheerfully, Not Under Compulsion

> "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7)

This breaks the tax-like compulsion of the Old Testament, placing giving within the personal interaction between believer and God (2 Corinthians 8:3-5). Giving is no longer external legal pressure but an internal response of gratitude and faith (Romans 12:1).

2. Proportional Giving

In addressing the collection for Jerusalem, Paul advised:

> "On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income." (1 Corinthians 16:2)

Though this does not explicitly mandate 10%, it reflects the proportional principle of "those who have more, give more" (2 Corinthians 8:12-15). This principle emphasizes fairness and responsibility rather than rigid numerical standards, reflecting the flexibility and wisdom of New Testament giving.

3. Imitating Christ's Sacrifice

Paul highly praised the Macedonian churches for giving beyond their ability even in extreme poverty (2 Corinthians 8:2-3). He used this to encourage the Corinthian church to "excel in this grace of giving" (2 Corinthians 8:7).

The ultimate foundation of all giving ethics lies not in human example but in Christ Himself:

> "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich." (2 Corinthians 8:9)

Therefore, the highest paradigm of New Testament giving is not legal stipulation but Christ's self-sacrifice. The New Testament replaces the "tithe law" with "sacrificial giving." **This means 10% should not be the ceiling of Christian giving but the floor. Not the finish line of giving but the starting line—a "training wheel" in the process of spiritual maturation, allowing us to grow in thought, skill, and spirituality.**

Church Practice Through History

In the apostolic era and the following two centuries, the Christian church was primarily marginalized or persecuted. Giving during this period was characterized by strong mutual aid and complete voluntariness.

Acts records that believers "had everything in common," selling property and possessions to give to anyone in need (Acts 2:44; 4:32-35). This was not based on some fixed percentage distribution system but arose from Spirit-led fellowship life, reflecting the principle of "distribution to each as any had need" (Acts 4:34)—a radical generosity born of love and mutual support.

Early Church Fathers' Views

Early church father Irenaeus pointed out:

> "The Jews were confined to tithing, but Christians who have received freedom dedicate all their possessions to the Lord's use, giving cheerfully and willingly."

In the post-Nicene period, church fathers generally viewed Christian tithing as "acceptable, but only as a minimum standard." Church fathers like Cyprian and Chrysostom rebuked Christians who didn't tithe as being worse than the Jews.

From the 6th century onward, regional church councils (such as the Council of Tours in 567 and the Council of Mâcon in 585) began explicitly requiring believers to observe tithing, viewing it as a moral or even legal obligation.

The Reformation and Modern Changes

The 16th-century Reformation theologically readjusted the nature of tithing.

Martin Luther, while opposing tithing as a work-based merit for salvation, supported believers paying tithes to secular authorities or state-recognized churches to maintain social order, pastoral salaries, church maintenance, gospel propagation, and poverty relief.

John Calvin took a more complex stance: he believed tithing as part of the Mosaic Law was fulfilled in Christ and no longer directly binding on Gentiles. However, the basic principle of honoring God with possessions as a steward transcends specific temporal systems. He believed tithing as an "appendage" acknowledging God's ownership still has continuing spiritual value. When believers faithfully tithe, God's blessing naturally follows, God's name is honored, and spiritual life is nourished, making this practice a commendable starting point for honoring God with material possessions.

How the Church Should View Tithing and Offerings

Based on the historical survey and theological analysis above, the church should establish an integrated view of giving that is both faithful to Scripture's original intent and adaptable to modern times.

Tithing and Offerings Are Not Law But Privilege

Giving has clear biblical basis and guidance. It is God's people's proper response to grace and one way we participate in God's redemptive plan. As Irenaeus said, giving is meant to train us to break free from material dependence and cultivate the habit of living unto God.

Maintain 10% as a Reference for Spiritual Growth, Not a Shackle

While it should not be absolutized as a condition for salvation, the tithe as a cross-generational proportional suggestion still holds tremendous value for training believers in discipline. This is also a requirement on our church's membership application form. It is a starting point for training in generosity and trust.

For those in extreme poverty, grace relief should be given; for those extremely wealthy, they should be challenged to pursue giving far beyond 10%, preventing them from using the 10% figure to avoid more thorough self-denial.

Strengthen the "Whole-Life Stewardship" Concept

Giving should not be limited to money; it must extend to time, talents, and asset management of one's entire life. A believer who only tithes but lacks integrity in the workplace and is indifferent to social justice is still an "unfaithful steward."

The church has a responsibility to teach believers how to budget according to biblical principles, how to handle debt, and how to distinguish "needs" from "wants," so that financial freedom becomes a driving force for gospel expansion.

Establish Transparent, Accountable Ministry Vision

The church should establish transparent financial reporting mechanisms and vision-driven budgeting. Believers should build deeper mutual trust, transparency, and collaborative relationships.

Conclusion

Tithing and offerings are not merely church administrative matters but core content of discipleship training. From the legal constraints of the Old Testament to the grace-based release of the New Testament, God's intention for humanity has never changed: He does not need our money; He desires our hearts.

When the church can inspire believers with Christ's self-emptying love, giving will no longer be an amount believers agonize over or numbers on an annual report, but living testimony of faith, a fragrant offering before God.

Appendix

From the Administrative Team: A Note on the Practice of Public Offering Records

We are grateful for the pastoral team's paper, "Tithing and Offerings: From Covenantal History to Modern Stewardship." This document helps us understand the meaning of giving from a biblical and theological perspective. As the pastors noted, once we more deeply understand the essence of giving, the real question becomes: "How do we live out relationships of trust, mutual support, and collaboration in community as we worship God together?"

As the church's administrative team, we want to share the thinking behind the practice of public offering records and how we respond to this pastoral direction.

First, we want to clarify that the principles of giving are biblical: acknowledging God's sovereignty, giving cheerfully, and imitating Christ's sacrifice. These do not change. However, whether records are public or private is actually a practical choice, and both approaches are reasonable.

Our church has chosen public records over many years, primarily so that everyone can see each other's participation and together celebrate God's work among us. As the pastors said, giving is "worshiping God together in community." The early church believers "had everything in common" (Acts 2:44). While this is not the same as public offering records, the spirit of mutual trust and transparent sharing is what we want to continue.

Of course, some may ask: didn't Jesus say not to give "to be seen by others" (Matthew 6:1-4)? This is a good question. The purpose of public records is not to show off or compare, but to encourage one another. If public records become a tool for pride, they lose the essence of worship.

If brothers and sisters prefer to give anonymously, we fully respect that. This is not a compromise of principle, but pastoral consideration. Internal records will still be kept; only the public report will show "Anonymous." As the pastors said, more important than whether we give by name or anonymously is the heart with which we give.

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Nomination Evaluation Form

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